

tail section holding onto the stinger (unfortunately, I was holding the stinger by the flat section and not the angled section). The front ground-handling wheels were lowered, resting the front part of the skids on the deck. We started releasing pressure from the rear ground-handling wheels at the same time. Without warning, the port side of the front skid ground-handling wheel dropped to the full-down position. In addition, the flight deck just happened to roll to port, causing the flight deck to swing upward and toward the aircraft tail. Both these actions caused the tail skid to collide with the deck. I was able to get my body out of the way of the tail but didn't let go of the stinger. You probably can guess what happened next. The stinger did its job and prevented any damage to the aircraft's tail. Unfortunately, since I was holding the stinger on the flat section, my hand was smashed between the stinger and the deck.

Flight-deck personnel saw what had happened and asked me if I was alright. I thought I was fine...just a little tingling in my left middle finger. I removed my glove and saw blood oozing from my crushed finger.

I walked down to aviation medical, where one of my friends works. I thought I had smashed my finger pretty good and might lose a finger nail. He took one look at my finger and took me to the surgeon. He examined my finger while the corpsman started cleaning my hand. That's when the pain hit. I was taken into the operating room where the surgeon removed the end of my middle finger at the first knuckle.

The moral of the story is that even the simple and mundane evolutions can find a way of becoming dangerous toward the end of a nine-month deployment. Our move crew had become complacent. We had moved Cobras day in and day out and nothing eventful had happened. Today, something did. We were going through the motions. We weren't thinking about the possible effects of rare and uncommon factors: like a wheel suddenly locking into an unexpected position or a large swell causing the ship to take a larger roll than usual. Mentally, we didn't stay ahead of the evolution. I only lost the end of one finger but easily could have lost my entire hand. ✚

## WHY PPE WORKS

By 1stLt. Christopher DeMars

Everyone loves to complain about wearing PPE. Typical gripes are, "It's uncomfortable," "It's old," "You can't see well through the goggles." A ton of reasons exist for not wearing it, but here's a good reason you should.

Sgt. Clark, a flight-equipment Marine was using a sewing machine that he'd worked on a hundred times before. Never before had there been a problem with the machine; it always had worked as it was supposed to. Today was much different. The machine started making a grinding noise. The thread



had tangled in the bobbin and had started to bend the needle. A few seconds later, the safety goggles jumped on his face. He stopped working, got up from his chair, and found part of the needle sticking out of his glasses. You can see from the photo exactly where this needle was heading.

We stress PPE for a reason. Here's the perfect example of why you always should have it and wear it. ✚

*1stLt. DeMars is the Ground Safety Officer at HMM-166.*